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News And Information For Pick™ Operating System Users

Issue Number 13

April 1985

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Standard Pick: What Should It Be?

- We've heard a lot of talk recently about the
- need for "a standard" for the Pick operating system, but no one has really explained what that means. What exactly is a standard? Is it some kind of document? Is it some kind of software implementation to which programs must conform? We recently talked to a few well-known vendors in the Pick market to get their opinions about what a standard Pick operating system should be.

- Mike Schellenbach of AccuSoft Enterprises
- felt "a standard would be a consistent operating system from manufacturer to manufacturer, so the software that I write for a Zebra will also work on an Ultimate, on a Datamedia, on the PC XT, and so on."

- Steve Setzman of Automation Technology
- also thinks a software implementation can function as a standard. "A standard could easily be described as the new Open Architecture release, which Pick has been promising us for four years," explained Setzman. "I'd like to see an operating system which incorporates a consistent EXECUTE statement across all the product lines, a consistent command stack, some communications facilities... I'd take Ultimate's EXECUTE, I'd take Ultimate's \$INCLUDE, I'd take General Automation's command stack. I'd take all the best and put it into a release supported by Pick."

- Automatic Programming owner Ken Simms felt a Pick standard "should be a document, something that the licensees can at least agree to in principle. A standard would also include the idea of the important technical people getting together from time to time as a committee, to discuss new requirements as they come up. There would be a standard subset of the software, but when one licensee wants to add new features, the committee could agree on the form of the new features so that when the other licensees implement those features, they'll be the same."

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across the spectrum of Pick machines, and not require additional development for each of the systems," explained Schellenbach. Simms agreed, though he noted that the continuing addition of special features unique to each licensee means "we are gradually losing transportability." Setzman pointed out another important benefit. "You stop having to invent the wheel all over," he says. "General Automation just spent a lot of money introducing an EXECUTE statement, which Ultimate has had out for over a year. The research and development dollars that are being put into reinventing the same tools that are already available via another licensee could be channeled into marketing."

Setzman also explained why he wasn't too concerned about licensees again creating a Tower of Babel of incompatible features after a standard is finally, if ever, established. "They've already proven how unsuccessful that philosophy is," he explained. To Simms, the future will have to provide a currently missing ingredient for keeping the licensees



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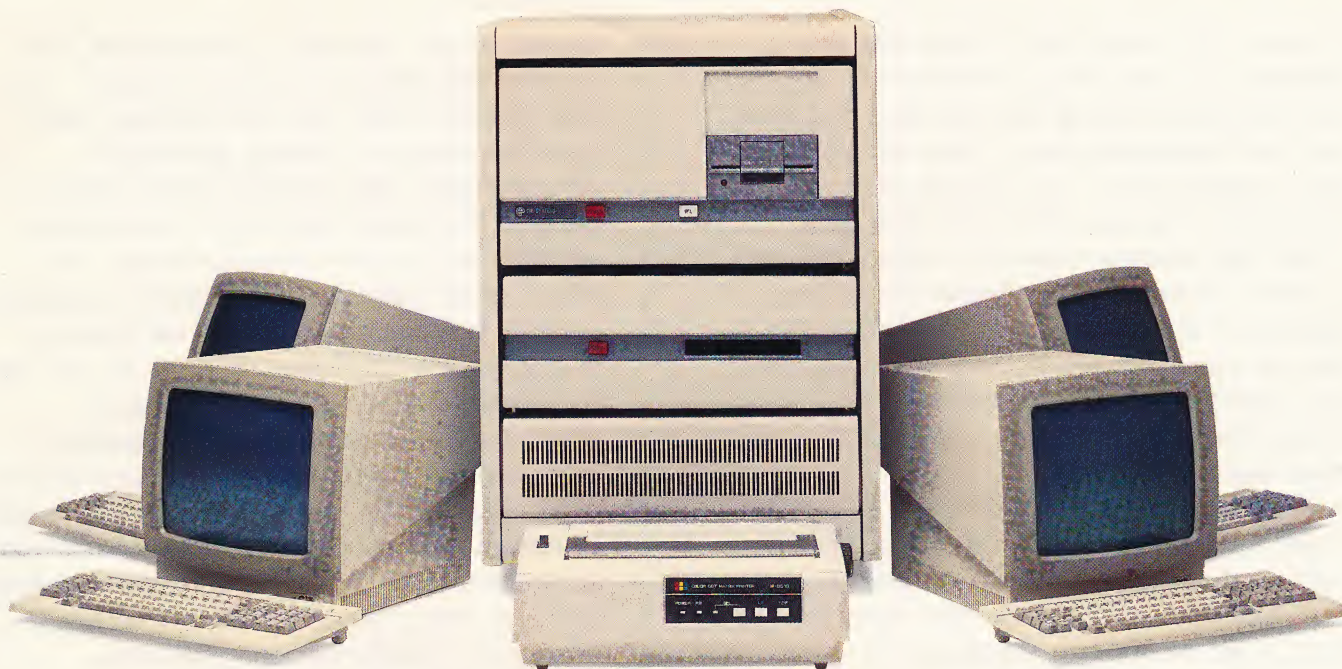
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in sync. "It's important to have not only a standard," he says, "but a method of communication among the licensees and Pick. That isn't happening now. They simply don't talk to each other. It's not that they necessarily disagree, they just don't talk."

That may change, however, since according to Pick's Richard Lauer, "we've scheduled a meeting in the next four or five weeks for as many of the licensees as care to attend that will, among other things, address the establishment of standards and overall objectives."

Unfortunately, Lauer doesn't yet sound sure of the future. "It's not totally clear at this point what the exact end result will be as far as a standard," he explains, "but what we are doing in all of our new contracts, for example, is including a requirement that any new implementation must successfully run an acceptance test procedure we've established. It exercises the system and produces a certain standard set of output. If a machine fails to pass that test, the licensee has

agreed in the contract to insure that the system will perform to that standard. Now that doesn't mean that the licensee won't have the option of adding additional enhancements, but at least there will be a generic Pick test that all of the standard systems will perform satisfactorily. The intent is to maintain and support a standard generic Pick system that will be common among all the licensees, at least all the new licensees. We hope that all the older licensees will adopt that same standard."

It's interesting to note that there's still no guarantee that an end user's software is going to run on any machine that can run the Pick acceptance test, since the end user's program could be using features that are unique to a licensee's implementation. Still, it's encouraging to see some signs of actual progress. When might Pick actually complete the first steps of establishing a standard? "I hope that we'll have very significant progress by the PickFair show scheduled in November," answers Lauer. Δ

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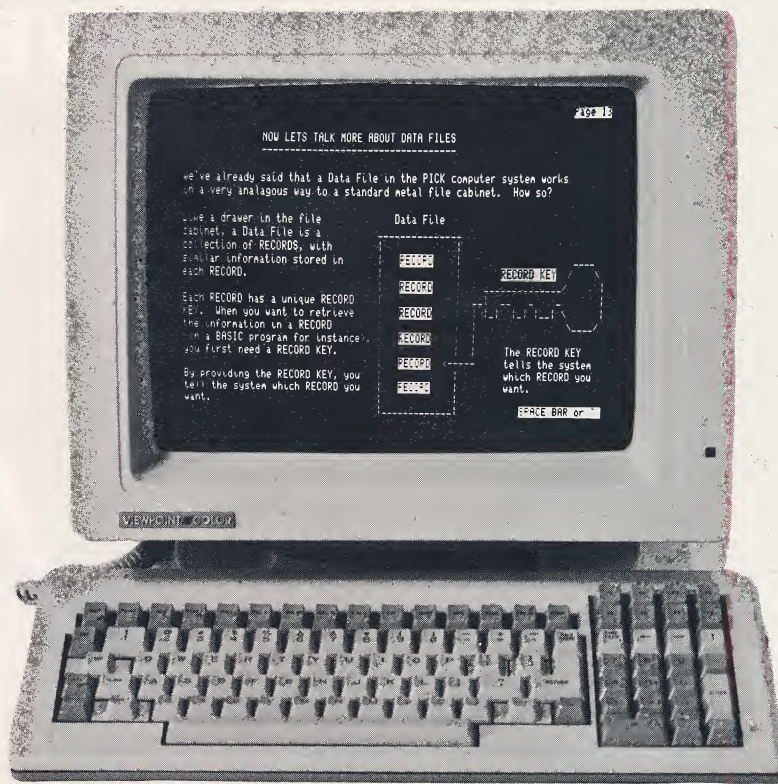
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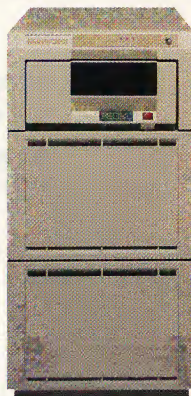


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